

today, which is causing many businesses across the country either to lay off or not to hire people.

Mr. Speaker, we need to empower America. We need to quit entitling America.

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE REFORM

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor tonight to request that President Obama include in tomorrow's discussion at the health care summit the issue of medical malpractice reform and defensive medicine—the kind of reform that will relieve Kansan families and business owners from facing higher health insurance premiums. We have to reduce health care costs, and this is a commonsense way to do so. If we do not control those costs, then any reform effort will fail, as the cost of health care and, therefore, the cost of insurance will increase.

Defensive medicine, where doctors order every possible test under the sun for fear of being sued, costs us more than \$650 billion each year, or 26 percent of our annual health care spending. These costs increase insurance premiums for doctors, and health care expenses simply get shifted to the patients.

Mr. President, if you are serious about improving patient care and about reducing costs, add medical malpractice reform to the agenda at your health care summit tomorrow.

□ 1630

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN THREATENS OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the United States is reaching a bleak milestone in Afghanistan. The death toll for our troops is now 996, or it was when this paper was written. It is inevitable that we will reach the 1,000 mark. How much further are we going to go in this?

Under these circumstances the American people have the right to demand

that the Afghan Government do everything it can to stop violent extremism in their country and to keep our troops safe. So far the Afghan Government has not lived up to its responsibilities.

Our Ambassador in Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, wrote a cable to the State Department in November in which he said that President Karzai "is not an adequate strategic partner" and "continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden, whether defense, governance, or development." He also wrote that when it comes to corruption, Karzai has a record of "inaction and grudging compliance."

This is outrageous, Mr. Speaker, because this government corruption undermines our very efforts in Afghanistan and puts our troops at risk.

When the Afghan people see the corruption in their government, they ask, and they should ask, Why should we help the Americans defeat the Taliban when our government isn't any better than the Taliban?

The Washington Post just recently, well, yesterday, I think, revealed a deplorable example of the Afghan Government's shady dealings. It was Monday that the article came out. It was written by Andrew Higgins and entitled "Kabul Bank's Sherkhan Farnood Feeds Crony Capitalism in Afghanistan." The article described the cozy relationship between the Afghan political elite and the Kabul Bank. The Afghan Government has poured tens of millions of dollars of public money into that bank. At the same time, the bank has made shady multimillion dollar loans to members of President Karzai's family, his government, and his supporters to buy luxury villas in Dubai. The article calls this "a crony capitalism that enriches politically connected insiders and dismays the Afghan people."

President Karzai's older brother and his former Vice President both have Dubai villas, but they're registered under the name of Sherkhan Farnood, the chairman of the bank. Presumably this is done to hide the goodies that the political big shots have gotten. The bank has plenty of money, including more than \$1 billion in deposits from Afghans. But "the vast majority of this money flows into the hands of a tiny minority, some of it through kickbacks and insider deals"—that's from the article—for the country's political, security, and business elites.

The bank also helped pay for President Karzai's recent reelection campaign, which was filled with charges of fraud. The bank's support for Karzai wasn't surprising. Why should it be? The bank is partly owned by Karzai's older brother and the brother of his vice presidential running mate.

And at a time when most Afghans are desperately poor, the Kabul Bank is spending \$30 million to build a fancy new headquarters.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have a right to ask, Is this what our soldiers are dying for? Is this what

we're spending tens of billions of our tax dollars for? So that well-connected elites in Afghanistan can enjoy luxury villas in Dubai?

We cannot allow this to continue. I have been demanding that we change our mission in Afghanistan to focus on SMART Security for a long time now. One of the cornerstones of SMART Security is an emphasis on better governance. Improving governance in Afghanistan is just as important, Mr. Speaker, as any military operation. Actually, it's more important.

That's why President Obama must insist that President Karzai and his cronies clean up their act and do it quickly. Without honest government, we will never defeat violent extremism in Afghanistan and the death toll for our troops will not stop.

RECOGNIZING KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY'S PROUD CAMPAIGN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to recognize Kansas State University's Proud campaign. K-State Proud was founded in the fall of 2006 as an effort for students to help other students. This year's event will be celebrated this Saturday, February 27, during the Missouri-Kansas State men's basketball game. This is a great concept that reflects our Kansas values of family, community, and stewardship.

There are many people who take college experience for granted. Leaving home to pursue an education is not a given for many families. Certain amounts of financial, emotional, and spiritual support are needed to ensure a student's success. Sometimes bad things happen and students' families fall on hard times. And it's heart-breaking to see a student's dreams and hard work jeopardized by events beyond their control.

The K-State Proud campaign was started in an effort to keep these struggling students in school. It was started by students, for students. Students continue to organize, plan, and execute K-State Proud's activities. This year's co-chairs are Anna Zeiger, Reed Pankratz, and Robert Swift. That is what makes this effort so unique. There are no benefactors or trust funds paying an annuity that funds the tuition or living expenses for a struggling student. This program allows these kids to collect money from their peers and to distribute to those most in need. As a society, we should take a step back and look at what K-State Proud has accomplished. They have had a genuine compassion for complete strangers. They do more than pay lip service to the concept of charity. They put their money where their mouth is.

For a \$10 donation, the donor receives a K-State Proud t-shirt to be worn for the designated K-State basketball game. Special thanks should be